

Office of Public Instruction 21st Century Community Learning Centers Guidance

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is soliciting competitive applications for before-school, after-school, and summer programs to be funded by ESEA Title IV, Part B of the No Child Left Behind Act, administered by the U.S. Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Center Funds). Approximately \$1.7 million will be available for program year 2008-09.

WHAT IS A 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER?

A 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) is a place that offers programs and services that benefit the educational and related health, social services, cultural and recreational needs of a community. These centers serve as safe and nurturing environments where children can participate in enriching activities during times when school is not in session. The centers also can provide opportunities for literacy and/or educational services to the families of children participating in the program. These programs are the result of dedicated partnership efforts between the school and community-based organizations to meet the unique needs of individual communities.

PURPOSE of 21st CCLC GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the program is to:

- provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including tutorial services to help students, particularly those who attend low-performing schools, to meet state and local student performance standards in the core academic areas of reading and math;
- offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and
- offer families of students who are served by community learning centers the opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

TARGET POPULATION TO BE SERVED

According to the 21st CCLC grant section under the No Child Left Behind Act, ESEA Title IV, Part B, state education agencies are to make awards only to those applicants that propose to primarily serve students who are eligible to receive free and reduced price meals and to primarily serve students who are currently academically underachieving in mathematics and/or reading/language arts (based either on performance on state assessments such as the MontCAS or on district-administered diagnostic assessments).

APPROVED ACTIVITIES

Academic enrichment is the main priority of this grant with reading/literacy and mathematics intervention being the main component of the grant. However, to receive a grant under this program, applicants are expected to provide a broad array of additional services, programs and activities. Some suggested activities are listed below, but this is in no way an exhaustive list.

Related academic and enrichment activities that can be included in your program beyond math and reading intervention include but are not limited to the following:

- Science education activities;
- Art, music and cultural education activities;
- Entrepreneurial and personal financial education programs;
- Tutoring services (including those provided by senior citizen volunteers) and mentoring programs;
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) programs that emphasize language skills and academic achievement;
- Recreational activities;
- Telecommunications and technology education programs;
- Expanded library service hours;
- Health and nutrition programs;
- Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended or expelled to allow the students to improve their academic achievement;
- Prevention programs to include drugs, alcohol, tobacco, dropout, etc.;
- Remedial education activities and academic enrichment learning programs, including providing additional assistance to students to allow the students to improve their academic achievement;
- Counseling programs;
- Character education programs;
- Service learning programs;
- Programs that promote family or parental involvement and literacy; and
- Career education programs.

DOCUMENTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Federal requirements address **mandatory reporting of student achievement data** to the OPI and as part of national evaluation studies. In order to assure that this requirement is met, applicants must:

- Include a Letter of Support from the local district or county superintendent to verify collaboration and willingness to comply with reporting requirements; and
- Document how projects will align activities with curriculum.

PROGRAM REPORTING AND MONITORING

As a part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, consolidated state application requirements, The OPI is responsible for creating a system of oversight and monitoring for all participating programs, including the 21st CCLC Program. The agency currently uses a data management system, Creating Change, Inc. Grantees will also be required to collect data that reflects basic information about the characteristics associated with 21st CCLC projects funded through state-administered programs and the outcomes these programs were able to achieve as a result of

providing services to students and adult family members attending their programs. The data management system collects basic demographic information, center information, annual performance reports and multiple surveys. Grantees will be required to submit interim and year-end progress reports, according to individual program goals and objectives, as outlined in their application. Periodic updates will be requested. An annual narrative report will also be required. Any substantive fiscal or programmatic changes require prior written approval of the 21st CCLC program staff.

FEES FOR SERVICE

Services need not be offered free of charge, however, programs must be equally accessible to all students targeted for services, regardless of their ability to pay. Programs that opt to charge must offer a sliding scale and scholarships for those who cannot afford to pay and may not prohibit any family from participating due to its financial situation. Income collected must be used to fund program activities specified in the application within the grant period.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Research suggests that more time spent in engaged and sustained learning activities yields greater benefits. To ensure that children have ample extended learning time, the U.S. Department of Education believes that, based on their analyses of 21st CCLC and other after-school program evaluation data, centers should be open three hours a day and at least four days a week. Ideally programs would operate a minimum of two hours per day five days a week. There are no time requirements for holiday breaks or for summer programming. It is recommended, however, that during those times programs operate at least four hours per day. The hours of operation should, whenever possible, be established based upon the needs of the families. There are no time requirements for the family literacy or family education component.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants may be local education agencies, community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, city or county government agencies, for profit corporations and other public or private entities. A community-based organization is defined as a public or private for-profit or nonprofit organization that is representative of the community and has demonstrated experience or promise of success in providing educational and related activities that will complement and enhance the academic performance, achievement and positive youth development of students. While all organizations are eligible to apply, they must be partnered with an eligible school to be considered for funding.

- Federal regulations require that programs must primarily serve students who attend schools that serve a high percentage of students from low-income families. **For Montana, this means that grant awards are restricted to projects that primarily serve students attending schools that meet or exceed 40 per cent free and reduced price meal eligibility.**
- Federal regulations also require that a priority must be given to applications that serve students attending schools with a "school in need of improvement" designation under Title I and that are submitted jointly by a school district and a community-based organization.
- Applications from consortia (any combination of local education agencies and community-based organization) are acceptable, as long as all other requirements are met.

This includes the requirement that the project primarily serve students attending high poverty schools. In this instance, the program must be able to document the fifty percent (50%) or more of the students participating in the program attend a high poverty school. Any organization that is not a public school will need to submit an Intent to Apply, found on the 21st CCLC Website, by March 21, 2008.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

The OPI will fund only those applications that demonstrate how the program will assist students to meet state academic achievement standards in reading and math by providing expanded learning opportunities for academic enrichment that build and expand upon the regular school day, as well as a broad array of other related activities. Applicants must also demonstrate how the program will provide literacy and educational development opportunities to the families of the children participating in the program.

COMPETITIVE PRIORITY

Research shows that developing comprehensive afterschool programs that build and expand upon, yet are not an extension of the regular academic school day can yield positive outcomes for children. Strong connections between schools and after school programs and evidence of strong community collaboration is crucial to the success of this initiative. Therefore, the Montana Office of Public Instruction will give preference or competitive priority to jointly submitted applications that include at least one local education agency receiving funds under ESEA Title 1, Part A and/or any building(s) in school improvement status and at least one public or private community-based organization that intends to serve the target population as outlined above. Either partner may choose to be the fiscal agent. Either may choose to house the program. Applications that meet this competitive priority will receive preference over other applications of equivalent merit. Through such partnerships, a grantee responsible for implementing and evaluating the local program can ensure access to student achievement data. The LEA should also accept responsibility for sharing the content areas of the testing standards and supporting curriculum with its partners.

Additional consideration will be given to applications that document programming plans to meet the needs of middle and high school students.

RANGE OF AWARDS FOR APPLICANTS

For this funding cycle, it is anticipated there will be approximately **\$1.7 million** of competitive funding available for the 2008-09 program year. Existing 21st CCLC grantees currently in their fifth and final year of funding are eligible to submit new applications in an amount not to exceed sixty percent of their current award. Existing 21st CCLC grantees currently in their sixth year of funding are required to submit a renewal application for level funding documenting continued progress and success. Applications from both new and existing fifth year grantees will be evaluated on the selection criterion and be considered for potential grant awards from this single competition and funding allotment of \$ 1.7 million. Consideration will be given to equitable geographic distribution of grant funding and to populations currently not being served.

Federal statute prohibits states from making awards of less than \$50,000. Grant amounts will be dependent upon need, the variety of services, length of program, and the number of students and families to be served. Grantees should carefully consider all programming aspects and associated costs. Funding requests must be based upon the individual needs of the community and the depth and breadth of services to be provided. Budget requests should be reasonable and reflect amounts necessary to carry out the program's purposes and objectives. On occasion additional funds may become available throughout the project year for additional or special services. Notice of availability will be provided when appropriate.

BUDGET

Although a project maximum is not prescribed, applicants must justify their proposed budget through the budget narrative. Explain the relationship between budgeted items and project activities. Include information as to how budget estimates were determined. Discuss all items included within a category. For example: how were salaries determined, what is included in fringe benefits, how many hours will the employee work per week/month.

LIMITATIONS ON USE OF FUNDS

In general, the following prohibitions apply to projects supported under the CCLC grant program:

- Purchase of equipment must be integral and necessary for the project;
- Construction is prohibited;
- Snacks are required and need to be reimbursed by CACFP or NSLP and not paid for out of program funds;
- Land acquisition is prohibited;
- Supplanting is prohibited;
- Consultant costs are limited to \$450 per 8-hour day;
- Indirect costs are allowed but must be set at the indirect cost rate of the local education agency that is the applicant agency or is partnering with the applicant agency. The indirect cost rate of the local education agency must be approved by the OPI;
- Proposal development or planning costs are not allowable; and
- Rental costs are limited to the fair market value for similar facilities in your locale.

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Although not required, it is strongly suggested that applicants budget for the dedicated time of a project director to implement and administer the project. Applicants must determine whether the size and scope of the project requires a full or part-time director, and the specific duties attributable to that position. If this position is not included, provide the rationale for not needing a project director in the project design narrative. Applicants should be extremely careful to avoid the issue of supplanting.

TRANSPORTATION

Project sites may be on school grounds or in any other location that is at least as accessible as the school that the student attends. In some circumstances, this may require a plan for providing transportation to assure safe passage to and from the program. Indicate whether transportation is to be a component of the project and the basis for that decision. If it is included, document the basis for requesting transportation costs and how the service will be provided.

STAFF TRAVEL

Because training is an integral component of successful projects, each applicant is encouraged to include funds to cover travel and lodging expenses for staff to attend one national and two in-state training activities during each year of the project. State 21st CCLC meetings are required attendance for program directors. The OPI encourages the attendance of staff members who have direct contact with students. Travel costs for lodging, airfare or mileage and meals cannot exceed the federal allowable rate for out-of-state trips and the allowable state rates for travel within Montana. The Montana Department of Administration Website includes in-state rates and a link to access the federal rates. Information resource for mileage, lodging and meal rates for in and out-of-state travel: <http://doa.mt.gov/doatravel/travelmain.asp>

PROJECT DURATION

Approved grants will be funded, at the discretion of the SEA, for a maximum of five years contingent upon measurable progress and the success of the program. All funding will be contingent upon the U.S. Department of Education's annual appropriation to the state.

APPLICATION PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS

All applications must be completed and submitted online using the e-Grant process on the Montana Office of Public Instruction Website at <http://www.opi.mt.gov/>.

COMPETITIVE REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will first be reviewed by the OPI to ensure eligibility requirements and application requirements are met. The OPI will select a cadre of reviewers and provide them with training that clearly articulates the program goals and priorities. This will include extensive directions on the use of the scoring instrument. Review teams will be formed for the purpose of reading and scoring the common application. The OPI has the responsibility to ensure that there is geographic representation and that unserved populations are served.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

It is anticipated that the online e-Grant system will be available on March 14, 2008. Grants will need to be submitted through the e-Grant system by April 30, 2008.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD

It is anticipated that the competitive peer review process will be completed and final decisions will be made prior to July 1, 2008. Applicants will receive written notification of funding decisions as well as electronic notification to superintendents.